



Agricultural Land Preservation Program Howard County, Maryland



FOREST CONSERVATION PLANTING

The purpose of this policy is to allow for the enhancement of environmental conditions on preserved farmland while protecting the purpose of the agricultural easement, and to recognize changes to County, State and Federal farmland conservation programs. This policy is based upon the Agricultural Land Preservation Board Forest Conservation Policy of July 8, 1996, as revised September 8, 2008.

POLICY: Forest Conservation planting is the fulfillment of a developer's forest conservation obligation by planting off-site. Properties encumbered by an agricultural land preservation easement may be allowed to establish reforestation plantings, including off-site mitigation for a single site or multiple sites, and reforestation banks. Forest retention banks, however, are not permitted on easement sites. Planting may occur on County agricultural easement properties only in the following limited areas:

1. Stream buffers - trees may be planted no more than 100 ft. on either side of a stream (measured from top of bank).
2. Wetland buffers - trees may be planted no more than 50 ft. from the edge of a wetland (wetlands do not include ponds).
3. Slopes - 25% or greater may be planted to prevent erosion on cropland, or on pastures if the pastures are contiguous to other forested areas.

Note that the areas listed above are maximums to avoid incursions onto productive land. The reforestation criteria not considered to be sufficient reasons, by themselves, to reforest portions of each easement are a) wildlife habitat, b) areas adjacent to existing forest stands, and c) infill plantings between small forest and tree stands. A complete Soil Conservation and Water Quality (SCWQ) Plan, prepared by the Soil Conservation District, is required on any easement farm proposing to establish off-site forest conservation mitigation plantings or a reforestation bank. The SCWQ Plan must delineate the replanting areas, using the above criteria. In all cases the edge of planting lines shall be kept as straight as possible to allow for fencing to exclude livestock, and efficient operation of farm machinery. The following procedures and criteria shall be used in order to create field/pasture boundaries:

1. Delineate the proposed areas to be planted using criteria 1 through 3 above.
2. Calculate the area to be planted. This is the maximum allowable acreage to be planted to trees and show on map as "maximum allowable planting area" with boundaries noted.
3. Adjust boundary lines as needed to provide farmable/fence-able field edges. The acreage cannot vary more than 10% from the original calculated maximum acreage and show on map as "final proposed planting area" with boundaries noted.

This Policy applies to both County and State agricultural easement properties. For all properties in the State agricultural preservation program, final approval for the Forest Conservation mitigation easement is required by the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) prior to recordation. The County will forward the proposal to MALPF for review only if all County requirements are met.

For More Information

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